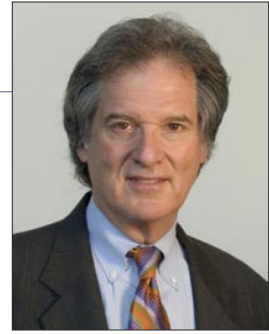


LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



There is a silly joke that goes, “How do you make a 90 year old woman yell s__t?” The answer: Have the woman next to her yell “BINGO!!” Well, I had hoped for a bit more excitement on Christmas Day, but what I got was more meaningful.

Our mixed Jewish/Catholic family delayed the giving of holiday presents to go to the Jewish Home and spend a few hours with the residents. Every year on this day we perform some service for the needy. One year we cooked for 1500 at a soup kitchen; a couple of years we served dinner at a shelter. And this year we signed up to serve lunch for the non-Jews living at the Jewish home (always for the underdog). Unfortunately, some plague had ravaged the building and it was shut down. We were told that our new assignment was to play games with a group of independent residents.

Apparently, we took the change better than the other 20 volunteers, none of whom showed up. But, there we were, ready for “Jokereeno”. It was like BINGO, but with over-sized playing cards instead of numbers and almost identical to but couldn't be called Pokereeno because of copyright infringement! I am not sure who was around to enforce that rule. At the appointed hour, the players began to amble into the room, many with walkers. One woman was 96 years old, and her 100-year-old husband had just died after their 75 years of marriage. My father-in-law did the calling of numbers, I handed out the markers and showed the big cards around to the players at the various tables who had difficulty hearing, and my wife, mother-in-law, daughter, and her fiancé helped the players find the numbers on their boards and made sure those who thought they had won actually had the correct numbers on their cards. We all acted as cheerleaders, and I was especially concerned about the poor luck of a relatively young man who clearly had suffered a cerebrovascular event. The game was played as seriously as a Bobby Fisher chess match, and when the same numbers appeared in successive games, there was considerable grumbling and my shuffling skills were held in question (for future reference, stop shuffling and just use the cards not yet played). The prize of \$.50 per winning card was not as important as just being able to win.

At 2:30, as our supply of quarters was dwindling, a voice came over the loud-speaker announcing that it was now time for the residents

to return to their rooms for dinner. So, after a couple of hours with human companionship, off these elderly residents went to their apartments where they lived by themselves. Since the kitchen staff was given the day off for Christmas, the skeleton crew would be delivering to each a corned beef sandwich. If I had to look up in Wikipedia the definition of loneliness, this picture should be there.

Clinical Advances in Hematology and Oncology ushers in the new year with a review of K-Ras mutations in colorectal cancer by Dr. M Wasif Saif and Dr. Manasi Shah that suggests that pretreatment testing of K-Ras in patients with metastatic colorectal cancer offers information that is useful in deciding treatments. Dr. Michael R. Harrison and colleagues focus on antimetotics, discussing novel agents that target both the microtubule and nonmicrotubule constituents of mitosis. Dr. William Wierda discusses new research in prognostic factors in chronic lymphocytic leukemia, and Dr. Marc Rothenberg comments on the diagnostics and treatment of patients with hypereosinophilic syndrome. Dr. James Raftery teaches us of the ways of drug pricing in other countries and gives insight on what may improve that of the United States. Also in this issue, we feature the best abstracts of the 2008 San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium that were selected by the experts on our editorial advisory board.

I hope that all of our readers had a wonderful holiday season with their friends, family, and those they love. Treasure it whilst you have it.

Until next month...

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bruce D. Cheson".

Bruce D. Cheson, MD